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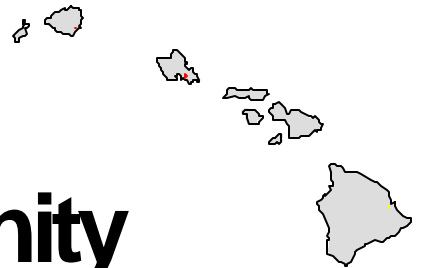
Hawaii Tourism Authority

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Statewide Community Informational Meetings Summary

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July 2001



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Statewide Community Informational Meetings

Summary of Findings

BACKGROUND

As part of the Hawaii Tourism Authority's (HTA) community outreach efforts, the HTA board and staff held community meetings on the six major islands from June 14 to July 2, 2001. The public was notified of the community informational meetings through: press releases, advertisements in major county newspapers, letters to the Legislature, informational flyers sent via fax, mail and e-mail, and the HTA's website.

The purpose of the meetings was to share what the HTA accomplished since it drafted its tourism strategic plan, *Ke Kumu*, in 1999. The meetings also provided an opportunity for the HTA to discuss future plans and activities. In addition, the meetings provided a venue for the public to ask questions, comment and voice concerns.

Two hundred twenty-eight people signed in at the community informational meetings. According to the evaluation surveys, the meetings were helpful to the participants. The majority felt that meetings should be held twice a year, and that the length of the meeting (two hours) was "just right." Most of the attendees felt the time, day, and location were convenient. The HTA staff reviewed and analyzed the completed survey forms and transcripts from the meetings. The following is a summary of the major themes, both statewide and by county.

FINDINGS – Major Themes Statewide

Community Involvement with the HTA and the Visitor Industry. The items identified included:

- The public wants more opportunity for input and interaction with the HTA.
- There is interest in having more programs that involve the public with the visitor industry (e.g., ambassador programs and public-private partnerships).
- The quality of interaction between residents and visitors is important.

- People appreciate the HTA coming to the community to listen to their concerns.
- Many asked the HTA's continued support for community-based projects, events and programs (such as the harbors greetings programs and the Visitor Aloha Society of Hawaii).
- People pointed out that generally, what is good for the community and its residents is also good for tourism. Making Hawaii a better place for residents also makes Hawaii a better place to visit.

Clarifying roles of the HTA & other government agencies. The participants were concerned about funding infrastructure improvements related to visitor use such as maintenance of roads, parks and piers. They also expressed concern about regulation of the cruise industry. Some believe that infrastructure and monitoring the cruise industry are within the HTA's purview, while others do not. Moreover, there is a general lack of understanding as to the division of responsibilities between the HTA, other state and county agencies, as well as the Legislature.

The HTA needs to clarify its roles and responsibilities – what it can and cannot do.

Support for Sustainable Tourism.

- There is a need to balance protecting Hawaii's natural resources, enhancing residents' quality of life, and ensuring that economic opportunity is provided through tourism.
- A number of attendees support a Sustainable Tourism/Carrying Capacity Study by the HTA and the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) that would identify levels of impact statewide and by island. Participants recommended specific issues that the study may want to investigate further, including alien species (e.g., miconia) and traffic. Some attendees were also interested in participating in the study.
- There was also support for developing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
- People spoke in support of developing qualitative measurements related to visitors' perception of their experiences in Hawaii and enhanced quality of life for the residents. This would be in addition to quantitative measurements tied to increasing visitor expenditures.

Investment in the Environment and Natural Resources. Hawaii's natural resources need to be protected and preserved for the benefit of both residents and tourists. More money needs to be invested in the environment, especially state parks. Attendees differed on where the funding for this should come from.

Uniqueness of Each Island. There was recognition of each island's unique qualities and the need for different types of tourism development. The participants referred to Hawaii's people and culture that sets us apart from other destinations. The HTA should keep this in mind in its decision making. Moreover, what works for one island may not necessarily work for another. Some non-Oahu attendees referred to not wanting another Waikiki.

Cruise Line Industry. Participants focused on two areas:

- Appreciation of, and support for, harbor greeting programs.
- Concern over the environmental impacts of cruise ships, such as pollution from the ships and degradation of the coastal resources.

FINDINGS – Major Themes Countywide

OAHU

Community Involvement with the HTA and the Visitor Industry.

- Ambassador programs for residents will assist not only the organizations, but also in marketing the State.
- Appreciation for the HTA's support through its Product Development program, which has helped support community cultural and sporting events, and festivals. They hope that it will continue.
- Appreciation for the opportunity to have a dialogue with the HTA board.
- Concern about what will be done with the public input received during the meetings.

Investment in the Environment and Natural Resources. Some spoke in favor of the HTA investing in the protection the environment and natural resources.

Support for the Carrying Capacity/Sustainable Tourism Study.

Attendees were supportive of the HTA and DBEDT's initiative for a Sustainable Tourism Study. They want to know the impacts that tourism will have. Members of the audience were interested in participating in the study as well. There was also support for conducting an EIS. Some were concerned that the effects of tourism are not known.

Diversification of Marketing. Some participants suggested diversifying marketing to reach populations such as the Gay and Lesbian and African-American communities.

Cruise Line Industry. There was also concern for the cruise ships' impacts on the environment, such as the pollution of coastal waters.

ISLAND OF HAWAII

Community Involvement with the HTA and the Visitor Industry.

- People appreciate the HTA's support of cultural events and festivals through its Product Development program. They hope that the HTA will continue to support community-based programs.
- Big Island residents appreciated the opportunity to have a dialogue with the HTA board.
- Visitor Industry and residents need to work together and create a network.

Support for the Carrying Capacity/Sustainable Tourism Study.

Attendees were supportive of the HTA and DBEDT's initiative for a Carrying Capacity/Sustainable Tourism Study and EIS. They want to know the impacts of tourism.

Cruise Line Industry. Participants were concerned of the cruise ships' impacts on the environment, especially in Kawaihae Harbor. Trash and sewage from the cruise ships disturb residents. Concerns were also expressed for pier improvements.

Uniqueness of Island of Hawaii. Participants do not want to be another Waikiki. They believe their island has much to offer the visitor, in terms of activities, culture and people.

Clarifying roles of the HTA & other government agencies. Attendees expressed their desire that the HTA help fund and improve infrastructure, such as piers, small towns, roads, and park facilities.

KAUAI

Community Involvement with the HTA and the Visitor Industry.

- People expressed gratitude for HTA support through its Product Development program, especially in the areas of cultural and techno tourism, festivals, as well as events, such as the PGA Grand Slam.
- They also appreciate support of VASH and Harbor and Airport Greetings Programs.
- They hope that the HTA support will continue.
- People appreciate having a forum for community comment and input.
- They recognize that Kauai's community partnerships and involvement with HTA continues to be strong.

Uniqueness of Kauai. Participants believe Kauai's assets--such as its technology industry, small town feeling, residents, culture and natural environment--sets them apart from the rest of the Hawaiian Islands.

Investment in the Environment and Natural Resources. Participants pointed out that the natural environment needs to be preserved and protected for future generations. Beaches and maintenance of the parks are seen as needing significant assistance.

MAUI COUNTY

Community Involvement with the HTA and the Visitor Industry.

- People appreciate the HTA's support through the Product Development Program, especially in the areas of techno tourism, cultural tourism and festivals.
- They appreciate support of the Visitor Aloha Society of Hawaii.
- There is the hope that the HTA will continue to provide funding.

Support for the Carrying Capacity/Sustainable Tourism Study. Attendees believe it is important to do the Carrying Capacity/Sustainable Tourism Study in order to see how tourism impacts Hawaii, and to see how tourism can be sustained.

Investment in the Environment and Natural Resources. Participants expressed the necessity of protecting and preserving parks, the environment and endangered species. Reference was also made to protection from alien species. In addition, the participants were vocal about not wanting their environment trashed.

Uniqueness of Maui. There was recognition that Maui is different from Oahu. Some people discussed developing the health and wellness industry, to include holistic healing ventures.

Other. On Lanai, participants believed that planning and development of Manele Harbor and a greeting program is necessary, since the number of flights to the island has been cut.

CONCLUSION

The HTA obtained constructive feedback from the community meetings. Comments will be useful in a number of areas, including:

1. The revision of *Ke Kumu*;
2. Developing tactical activities in the HTA's programs (i.e. Product Development, Events, and Marketing);
3. Enhancing future communication and community relations efforts; and
4. Developing legislative positions and initiatives.